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On Behalf Of:

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I am a parent of a child with dyslexia and literacy advocate in Central Oregon. I've spent the past 8 years working with local schools, educators, our Community College and University leaders, and local grant-making agencies and forging relationships with anyone and everyone who will talk to me. What has been my message? There are volumes of interdisciplinary research and evidence-based studies spanning more than 50 years, all pertaining to the science of reading - which includes data about how children learn to read and identifies the most effective methods for teaching reading skills. This research clearly spells out the necessary steps to reading success - phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. My message has been that children with dyslexia and underserved children can and will learn to read, when provided with proper instruction.

Do you want to know what we are up against? We are trying to change the minds of teachers one at a time. We have school principals who have no idea why their building reading scores are so low, because they have had no training on effective literacy practices. And just when a district seems to be headed in a positive direction, in comes a new superintendent who swings the entire district back to disproven methods of teaching reading. The problem is NOT that we don't know how to help children learn how to read. The problem is that Oregon doesn't have a comprehensive and enforceable plan to train teachers and administrators in the Science of Reading and ensure that schools adopt curriculum aligned with the Science of Reading.

Do you really think that having ODE "study ways to help children learn how to read" is going to be an effective way to change the trajectory of Oregon's reading problems? Let me paint a picture of where we are: Oregon has some of the lowest NAEP scores in the nation. ODE has been talking about literacy for a long time, but it only provides broad frameworks and recommendations. Schools want to continue their current practices. Oregon Universities continue to train new teachers using methods that are ineffective for 60% of Oregon's children. Parents are led to believe that their children are doing fine, when in fact their kids are below grade level proficiency. Kids are understandably frustrated and many check out or drop-out. It's a vicious cycle that will not end without mandatory and decisive action. Other states are making progress on improving reading scores. These states are requiring change at all levels, they are providing universal training for teachers, they are requiring changes in curriculum - all aligned with the Science of Reading. Other states are taking action and DOING things that are known to be effective. And their reading scores are improving.

What is the point of having ODE to perform it's own "study of ways to help children learn how to read"? We know what needs to be done. There are many states with blueprints for success that we could easily use. What we have in Oregon, is a failure to actually DO or require schools to DO what needs to be done.

Our kids can't wait any longer for change. Our kids deserve more than another study. Our kids deserve a plan that funds teacher training and adoption of curriculum based on the science of reading. Our kids deserve to have schools and teachers who know how to teach every single one of them how to read proficiently.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my testimony.

Sharon Bellusci